

Linda Clair
Five-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – June 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 3b – Monday morning discussion session

Linda: How are you N.?

Question: I'm good, but lot's is happening for me, and the most important thing that I feel is my need to be grounded. I feel I can ground myself through the breath, through the walking, and pain is very good for grounding me too. I'm just playing with all those things, experiencing them in my sitting, and it's really helping me. But I do get lost, and then come back to myself.

Linda: When you say "lost" what do you mean?

Question: Lost in thought. It's very interesting to watch the process for me – to be aware of my breath, or to be aware of my feet, or to be aware of the pain – and just see how quickly I lose that and go into the thought. And sometimes I'm just surprised what I'm thinking about, because it's really nonsense, and it's nothing to do with what's happening for me. So it feels like a very intense time at the moment and I'm *just sitting through it*, I think is the best way of describing for me. And of course I'd welcome any input you have, and any guidance that you can offer me.

Linda: Well, just be careful when you feel surprised that you don't start beating yourself up about thinking. Because when you're surprised it means you feel like you shouldn't be thinking. You said you're surprised at what you're thinking about because it's got nothing to do with what you're doing – well, no thought does. So it doesn't matter what you're thinking about, it's that movement, it's a very deep-seated habit, addiction – not being here. So never underestimate the time it's going to take to become free of that because it's so incredibly deep. But it's not bottomless. Of course there comes a point where it does stop, the desire does stop.

So if it's becoming more intense like that and things are happening more quickly and intensely that's actually a really good thing. So just keep doing what you're doing. Don't feel that you should be feeling something different or even doing something different. Because that's the temptation, "If I'm thinking I'm doing something wrong." And it doesn't mean that, but there can be that subtle judgment of it, "I'm doing something wrong so I need to do something different." But it's not that, you just plug away at it, as you're doing. And it'll feel like you're not getting anywhere – which you're not – that it's not working, all that sort of stuff. But just keep doing what you're doing, stay as grounded as you can. And because you're thinking it doesn't mean that you're not grounding yourself enough. It's just this habit that takes time to be free from.

Question: It was interesting yesterday for me when you were talking about the reaction to things, events. And I've been watching – with the sounds, or with the pain, or whatever sensations are happening – the process that that seems to trigger in the thinking process. That's been very interesting to, not see the connection, but just to realise that there is a link, perhaps in me, with that behaviour.

Linda: So yeah, watch your reaction, watch that surprise. Not what you're thinking about but your reaction to it. What you're thinking about is really irrelevant, it's just the bait that has got you in. And then you go, "Oh, how can I have been sucked in again?" So are you spending very long in one thought?

Question: No, it seems to be quick. As much as I can tell it seems to be quite quick. I don't get carried away with a story, or if I do I'm not even aware of the storyline – it seems to be a thought and then I catch it.

Linda: Well that's really good, but it's also very tiring because when you see it and then come back to your body you're using a lot of energy. And if you're doing that: boom, boom, boom, throughout a sitting, throughout the day, throughout a retreat, it's going to be very tiring. And that can wear you out to a degree. What it's doing really is wearing the mind down, but it's also very tiring for you to do that. It's much easier, it's so tempting, to think, because it's like you're having a little vacation, a holiday, away from being here. And it's just so tempting to float off into your imagination. And when you're taking a stand and going, "No, I'm not going to do that. I'll come back," again and again and again, it's tiring. But that's what you need to do, and keep doing it. It's like an endurance test, a test of your endurance.

Question: Yeah, it feels like that. But I have been doing the optional sits as well so it's make it long days, but I find it very worthwhile. It seems to be intensifying the whole process for me.

Linda: Good, and that's what you want – that intensity. And that's what needs to happen. You need to keep building on that intensity. And that's why a retreat is so good because you don't get much of a chance to have a break. So it's a concentrated period of coming back, coming back, coming back, until one day you just don't go away, so you don't need to come back. But gradually, gradually it becomes much more natural to be in your body than to not be in your body.

Linda: Any more feedback, questions?

Question: Over the last day and a bit that we've been here I've realised, through the sits and just being on retreat, that most of my thoughts I think are based in fear. A lot of my thinking is based in fear. I can see a lot of my body language is based in fear, my eye movements are based in fear, or a sense of urgency linking back to fear. So as I'm sitting I'm getting overwhelmed – if this process of awakening or just peace is possible. It's just really hitting me, not that I haven't been aware of it, but I think it's heightened since I've been on retreat. So I'm just a little bit overwhelmed if it is possible.

Linda: It is possible but that fear is at times going to be overwhelming. It will probably change during the retreat, and we're actually almost halfway through now. So try not to be overwhelmed by another few days of this. It is a huge thing. And a lot of people go into a retreat, or into this whole process, underestimating it. I know I did. I'd say most people do – you just can't *not* underestimate it really. I know I went into it thinking, "Oh yeah, I want to be enlightened, I want to do this and that." And then by the time I realised how much was involved it was too late to pull out. I was just sucked in, and it was like, "Ah, I don't know if I want to do this." But I didn't have a choice. And a lot the time it was overwhelming. There were also periods where it was all I wanted to be doing, it was just the most amazing thing. But a lot of it is hard slog, and that's what I didn't know. And that is what is not advertised, particularly these days with a lot of the Advaita stuff around. They say: "You just do this. You're already free," and all that crap. It's hard slog, and as N. was just

saying, this tendency to think, this desire to think, is just incredibly deep seated. And you're right – it all comes from fear. And when that fear went in me I realised, as you're saying, that every little body movement was really motivated by fear.

So, all I'm doing here is saying, "It is possible." And it is possible in you if you want it enough – and you have to want it more than anything. Otherwise the fear will take you over and just get overwhelming. The fear, you realise eventually, is also a thought. It's the source of all your thinking but it's a thought in itself. And when you realise that it's the most amazing thing. Because you go, "Ahh! All the fear I've ever had was just not really real, this is all a bluff, this mind is just complete fabrication, complete illusion." But getting to that point you have to go deeply into you and see that fear, and you need to be humbled by it because this is a very humbling process. So you need to be strong but also humble and not scared to be vulnerable as well, because you are going to feel incredibly vulnerable at times. But to really feel that vulnerability you need to be strong as well. And that's what this whole practice does – it strengthens you. And I will help you and guide you but really it's up to you. And the main thing is to become strong and independent and not have to lean on anything, particularly your mind.

So I would just say keep going, keep going. Everyone feels like that at some stage off and on. So keep seeing that fear, keep coming back to your body. I can say it's not real, but really you have to realise that yourself. And that's what you're doing here – becoming enlightened, gradually enlightened, and the enlightenment is becoming free from your fear, enlightened of your fear.

So when R. was talking last night, about near-death experiences he had last year he said there was no fear, and that's true. But he didn't die completely so he didn't get the whole story. He said there was no fear, there was just nothing. And that is actually a stage of it but it's not the whole thing. When people say "nothing" it sounds very unattractive, to me – emptiness, nothing, all that sort of stuff. There's no fear, but when the fear goes it gives you this space for *everything* to come in and you realise what the fear was doing was blocking all this stuff, this aliveness, this life. Because you're really too scared to be alive. So yeah, it's sort of nothing, but it's everything, it's quite amazing. And that's what happens when the fear goes. So keep going.

Question: It's a lot about the fear too. At the beginning of the retreat you said to somebody, "Put yourself in my hands." And that's what I feel like I've been doing – I didn't realise that. There's been a lot of fear come up when I had that throat constriction thing, you know. I've usually got comfortable with retreats thinking, "Okay, I'll just be here in my body." That's usually my intention – not to create a fantasy about what I'm going to do when I go home. But this one, I can see with the fear, without making it into a sort of a drama, seems to be a layer of grief or something wrapped around it too. Not even for particular things but it feels like it's somewhere in my body, and it's got wrapped around the fear as well, so it's going through two things. So when I say I felt like I'm putting myself in your hands I could hear you saying, "Come back to the counting, come back to your body. This is an experience." So it was using that as a mantra – is that alright? – I just had to keep saying it, to get through.

Linda: I used to do that with my teacher quite a bit too. And I was just – I've said it before – I was incredibly attached to him. And some people would say, "Oh, that's not right, you shouldn't be attached to anything." But really, it was the attachment that broke everything, and it just took away... It's like I've got this stupid injury from overdoing it at the gym, and F. has been treating me, and I don't know what to do so I'm just completely trusting him and putting myself in his hands, and

it just takes away this ego or whatever. You just go, "I don't know, so..." And I trust him. And I'm saying do that with me – trust me, because I do know what it takes and what's going on. So in that way I'm saying trust me. And also, if you trust that I'm in this state and you're not, not yet, it just takes away that load on you.

Question: Yes, that's what it feels like. And I've never felt you so beautiful as these last retreat days either, so thank you.

Question: I feel reluctant to do this because you need no advice or suggestions from me at all. But you're the only one who would be in a position to judge whether my suggestions are helpful to other people here. The first one is about thoughts, and this was taught to me thirty or forty years ago. And that was, and I find it works for me, when I find my thoughts are running away while breathing, I take in a breath over five or six heartbeats, and then hold my breath for three. And while I'm holding the breath thoughts stop.

Linda: Well, for one thing, this isn't about stopping thinking. There's a real difference. I have, and other people have, talked about this and it's not what I suggest people do. So thanks for your suggestion but I wouldn't advise people to do that. So this is a very body-based practice. It's not about stopping thinking. And I know you can do that if you do things like that – it's a bit like holding your breath everything stops. It's not about that, it's something much deeper than that. It's getting to the source of the desire to think. And that's what C. was talking about when he was feeling that overwhelming fear.

So we can tend to feel – and I used to do that too, I'd hear people say, "Oh, I didn't have any thoughts for that session," – and I'd go, "I had so many thoughts, I was thinking all the time, maybe I'm doing something wrong." Because that sort of technique, I feel, can encourage that too – to feel, "If I've got no thoughts that's good; if I'm thinking that's bad." And that's not what this is about. You have to be able to allow the thinking process to happen and to have the strength to come back to your body. So having no thoughts – or what you feel is no thoughts, and it's just a very relative thing – is not necessarily a deeper state. It's just that you've forced the thoughts out by focusing on something, and forcefully stopped them. So this is a very different practice to that. It's using the body to bring your attention back to the body, and start to understand the whole thinking process rather than just trying to put a halt to it.

Any questions about that.

Question: No, that makes sense to me. It's something I have done for quite a long time and it has seemed to be of assistance to me, but that was probably just because I didn't understand what I was doing. I've been blessed with a very powerful mind, which is a blessing and curse. It jumps around like a demented grasshopper and it's a relief to be able to stop it. But it's interesting to hear another perspective on that technique, and the fact that it might not be appropriate in the long-term.

Linda: No, I think in the long-term no. You can experiment with things like that and it is nice to have it stop. I'd say try and use the counting, try that. See how that goes, because that will keep reining it in. The beautiful thing about this practice is that it helps you to understand what's going on. It's not just this thing of, "Okay, I'll stop my mind because that's what's supposed to happen." You need to understand the whole process, and the way things work, and why you're feeling fear, and why you're thinking. And that's a huge part of it. If you just fall asleep one night and wake up

enlightened – which I doubt has ever happened to anyone, maybe it has – you’re really not going to be of that much use to people. Because I know for me, I wanted to know *how* to get here. It was great being around enlightened people but I wanted a practice. And that is really going to make you much more useful, and also deepen your realisation. Because a huge part of the realisation, that I think some people miss out on, is the full thing – understanding completely what has happened, realizing completely what has happened. And that’s what this practice does.

Question: I feel similar to what C was saying. I remember when I started I had that real strong determination. It felt like it was something that I could fabricate with my mind, like if I was going to do a gym workout or something. I sort of amp myself up and be like, “Yeah, I’ll get it done.” And now I feel weaker in a sense.

Linda: You’re not weaker – you’re more vulnerable. You’re stronger in a sense. Weaker as you see it, but weaker in that there is less force there. So it’s a bit like a gym workout, which I have found out – you can injure yourself if you do too much too soon. So you can go into it like that where you’re really determined – you want to do it. But you do have this time restriction too where you think, “I’m going to do it in a year,” or two years, or whatever. What it needs is a sustained release, a sustained determination. And that’s a bit harder because it’s like slogging day-in, day-out. With certain times where you do have some sort of amazing experience, or you feel good or peaceful, or you feel like you’ve made a breakthrough. But a lot of it is this sustained determination, and it becomes like an endurance test. And the weakness is not weakness, it’s just vulnerability. And it’s a really essential part of this, and it’s very difficult to admit that to yourself when you can see it as a weakness. And it’s not, it’s the opposite. But go on if you wanted to say more.

Question: No, I think that’s it, thanks.

Linda: So be vulnerable – it’s very difficult to be vulnerable because you’re opening up and realizing what this is about. Exposing new skin and exposing yourself, as the layers come off.

So also, don’t feel that you have to sit through every time. Don’t make that a rule, chop and change a bit. Sit through when you feel to but don’t force it. And if you feel like you’re becoming too forceful just come back a bit, soften a little bit.

Question: I’ve been noticing while you were talking then that I’ve got a huge amount of energy in my body at the moment. And I’ve noticed this habit of something wanting to escape it, to take off almost, to move me out of my body. So I’m forcing my feet on the ground. Some of those sits, they’re not difficult but they feel grueling. It’s not like I’m sitting there in trauma, and I’m not, but something – apart from it being hard work – is equally determined not to go there. So I’m getting these lifting off and coming down all the time.

Linda: Well, what the sitting is doing is grounding that energy. So that huge amount of energy that you’re feeling, that maybe a lot of people here are feeling, is being absorbed into the body and grounded by your sitting. So it is going to be grueling at times, sometimes grueling, sometimes not, but it will keep changing. I’d say just keep doing what you’re doing. Be very aware when you’re not sitting of your body, which I know you are – I can see it when you’re walking, you’re really grounded. So just keep doing that whatever you’re doing. And for everyone too – whatever you’re doing be in your body. And that will make this a more intense process.

Question: Because I've noticed during the breaks – because my intention is just to ground in whatever way I can – sometimes it's something you said ages ago, "Where am I?" Sometimes it's just breath, whatever.

Linda: Yeah, come back to your breath down here too. It will feel like you want to break out, you'll get a lot of pressure in your body and your head particularly, and you'll feel you want it to go up into the crown chakra and all that stuff, and release it, and it all goes up. But no, bring it down – always bring it down. Feel it – you will feel that pressure but bring it down.

Question: I had one of those almost explosions, and I noticed the fear and bits of emotional – I don't know what they are.

Linda: And it doesn't matter what they are.

Question: No, not really, they just sort of float up and disappear. I've got a lot of, like flotsam, like a shipwreck, just bits and pieces coming out.

Linda: Yeah. So just let that happen but keep grounding.

Question: My question is kind of similar to M.'s and K.'s. I feel like I'm getting deeper in my body, and a little bit more from just the smaller tasks I'm doing during the day, whether it's walking to the room, having a shower, or eating breakfast or something like that. I feel more present and like I can absorb myself, as opposed to doing. And also doing the shorter sits as opposed to the longer sits. So my question is, because you mentioned bodily intelligence a little bit earlier, whether it's my mind that's resisting doing longer sits, or whether it's my body telling me to fall back a little bit and do the shorter sits and the walks instead. Does that make sense?

Linda: So you're saying, "How do you know?" Well, you don't really. I feel with you, you can sit for a long time and you often sit for a long time so it's not like you're being lazy if you don't sit for long periods. In fact it might be harder for you and M. to sit for shorter periods in a way. You never know really, you just do what you feel to do. So sometimes sit for a fair while, other times don't. Until your body does take over you're never really sure what's going on and what's your mind and what's your intelligence. You're here, that's intelligent enough. So I'd say sometimes just change it around, experiment a bit. And sometimes when you're walking you can feel really, really energised after it.

Question: Sometimes when I do the longer sits it can feel a bit forced. It's almost like my body becomes a little bit intangible. Not as in losing the boundaries or anything like that but it just feels a bit dry.

Linda: Yep, a bit dry and hard, there's this hardness about it.

Question: And then I think, "Okay, maybe I'm forcing it now." But then at the same I'm like, "Well just push through it, just keep going and see what happens."

Linda: Yeah, it's tricky because I used to have sits like that too where I'd want to extend myself, and it would almost become forceful, but really it was extending my boundaries, what I saw as my boundaries, which were all to do with fear. So I'd still say experiment – sometimes sit longer,

sometimes don't. But don't make it a rule – "I've got to sit for three hours every morning" – be flexible with it. And particularly if you do feel a bit drowsy get up and walk around. But no rules.

Question: I think it was Mike Tyson who said, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." 😊 And that's how I felt coming into this retreat – I had a plan.

Linda: One think I'd say is never prepare for a retreat because you've really got no idea what's going to happen.

Question: It's interesting though.

Linda: It's all theory. Thinking is all theory.